

Blessed Are The Meek

Matthew 5:5

If there is one quality that the world prizes, it's this: Power. The world says: Assert yourself. That's the way you get ahead in life. If you are not a pusher, you will never climb the ladder of success. Grab what you can. Don't let anyone take advantage of you. Don't be a doormat. Unless you make some noise, you will get nowhere in life.

Jesus, however, says the exact opposite here. He says: *Don't* assert yourself. *Don't* push for glory. *Don't* strive for recognition. Be meek, be gentle, be humble. That's the lifestyle he says receives God's approval, God's favor—that's what the word "Blessed" means. And that's the lifestyle that Jesus says will get it all in the end—they and they alone, he says, will be the true inheritors of the entire earth.

So, 2 opposing views: World says, "Mighty are the strong." Jesus, on the other hand, says, "Mighty are the meek." Totally counterculture! Totally against even what our natural flesh wants! In fact, all the Beatitudes are against what our natural flesh wants. That's why this entire series on the Beatitudes can be titled as "A Counterculture Lifestyle."

Yet, and here's the good news, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to display these attitudes as a lifestyle—including this one about having a meek attitude. Let's see how we can do it by first of all looking closely at this word, "meek." What does it mean? How can we define it?

What Meekness Is.

First of all, meekness or gentleness is *not* weakness. Take Moses as an example. Numbers 12:3 describes Moses as a humble or meek person, "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." Does this mean Moses a weak or spineless person? No one who confronts the most powerful person of his day—Pharaoh and leads about 2 million people for 40 years can ever be called a weak person!

Another person who is described in the Bible as being meek is none other than the Lord Jesus himself, the one who spoke this beatitude. After calling people to come to him [Matt 11:28], Jesus went on to say, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle [the same word translated meek in Matthew 5:5] and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" [Matt 11:29].

Interestingly, this is the only time Jesus described 2 of his inner qualities, and interestingly gentleness is one of the two. Meek "in heart"—not just externally, but from deep within, says the Lord. "This is who I am" says the Lord.

Would anybody in their right mind call Jesus as weak or spineless? A weak person couldn't go about taking a whip to cleanse the temple, go against the Herods and the Pilates of his day. And neither would a weak person call the powerful religious leaders of his day as whitewashed tombs, hypocrites and or even boldly pronounce words like "woe to you" to their face [Matt 23:13-36]!

However, the question still remains: What does the word meek mean? A little background of this psalm will help us answer this question. You see, David wrote Psalm 37 to encourage God's people who were going through oppression at the hands of their enemies. This is evident right at the beginning of the psalm itself.

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Psalm 37:1 reads, "Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong." The word "fret" has the idea of being agitated, getting angry, and thus causing one to seek retaliation. Plotting in the heart to get back at the person who hurt us. David says, "That's a sinful response." Verse 8 supports this truth, "Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil."

In other words, by retaliating, God's people will be guilty of committing sin—the sin of taking vengeance, which belongs to God into their own hands. That robs God of his glory as Deuteronomy 32:43 states.

On the other hand, David says, God's people are to entirely rely on him to bring justice at the right time and leave all judgment into God's hand. Also, they are to continually do good. The same psalm says that as well, "Turn from evil [meaning don't retaliate] and do good; then you will dwell in the land forever" [Psa 37:27]. There's that dwelling in the land phrase again—it's for those who don't retaliate but continually do good because they are fully submitting themselves to God's care.

So, who then are the meek? *They are those who entirely rely on God when being oppressed. They don't retaliate or take vengeance into their own hands. Instead, they continue to do good—even to those who hurt them!*

Meek people are strong people. They have their strength under control. It's not that the meek are weak and are afraid to retaliate. If such were the case, what's the point in calling them to refrain from retaliating? That's why meekness is not weakness as the world defines it.

In addition, it's not that a meek person never gets angry. They do. But for the *right* reasons. They get angry when God's glory is at stake or when injustice is done to others, *not when they face personal insults*. But even when they get angry for the right reasons, that anger is expressed in a controlled and balanced manner. Even when they have to say hard things, they don't say it with a *hard* heart. They care for the feelings and needs of others—including their enemies! They *always* strive to put the needs of others above their own. They don't retaliate but keep on doing good because they rely on God to bring justice at the right time.

That's how Jesus—the definition of meekness—lived, and that's how we are to live as well! And just as Jesus will inherit the coming kingdom as King for displaying a gentle attitude, we can be assured we too will share in that inheritance if we pursue a life of meekness.

Reward for a Meek Lifestyle.

Now, this verse that Jesus quotes in Matthew 5:5 is based on the Old Testament, in particular the first part of Psalm 37:11, "But the meek will inherit the land" with one exception. Jesus changed the word "land" to "earth" in this beatitude to indicate that his followers will not just inherit the land of Palestine, but the entire earth as a result of displaying a meek attitude when he returns to set up his kingdom. That's the reward for a meek lifestyle!

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The Bible's call for Meekness.

Not only in this beatitude, but in several other places, the Bible stresses believers to pursue meekness as a lifestyle—especially in our relationships with one another.

Colossians 3:12 "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness [meekness] and patience."

Ephesians 4:2 "Be completely humble and gentle [meek]; be patient, bearing with one another in love."

Even when it comes to Christian wives living with non-Christian husbands, Peter extols the pursuit of a meek or gentle spirit as a virtue. After saying don't make outward beauty as the ultimate goal in verse 1 Peter 3:3, he says pursue inner beauty in the next verse. 1 Peter 3:4 says, "Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle [meek] and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." He says Christian wives are to focus on the inner beauty that comes from having a meek and quiet spirit. Meekness is a heart issue, it's an issue of the "inner self." Remember, Jesus said he was meek "in heart" [Matt 11:29]!

So, don't retaliate—not just outwardly, but more importantly, don't be resentful on the inside as well. Rely on God [1 Pet 3:5] and keep doing what is good. Leave all results in God's hands. That's the point being made in these verses to Christian wives who have non-Christian husbands. By the way, the same spirit of meekness is required for Christian husbands with non-Christian wives!

And in the very same chapter, Peter later stresses this same non-retaliatory behavior as a requirement for *all* believers. 1 Peter 3:9 reads, "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" [1 Pet 3:9]. Don't retaliate—no tit for tat—but respond with kindness, goodness to those who act harshly toward you. And the assurance is that such people will experience God's blessing in the end!

So, you see, meekness is not an option for those who claim to be Christians. Jesus makes it very clear: *Only* meek people will be in the coming kingdom, which he will be setting up. **They and they alone will inherit the earth. Inherit—it's a gift given to them!**

How then, are we to cultivate this attitude of Meekness?

How can we grow in meekness? Only one way: *By relying on the Holy Spirit to produce this in us.* Notice what we are told in Galatians 5:22-23, "²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness [or meekness] and self-control."

Notice meekness is a characteristic that the Holy Spirit *alone* can produce in us. We cannot display this beatitude or, for that matter, any other beatitudes on our own. We have to depend and submit to the Holy Spirit in order to grow in meekness.

Now, having said that, we must also remember the Holy Spirit does use means to produce this kind of a lifestyle. And, in particular, he uses 2 means to help us grow in meekness.

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The first means the Holy Spirit uses to produce meekness in us is the Word of God. The sword that the Spirit uses is the word of God [Eph 6:17]. James 1:21 says this: "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly [meekly] accept the word planted in you, which can save you." In other words, not only are we to humbly submit to God's word at the time of salvation, but we must also have the same attitude towards God's word throughout our Christian life.

God's word must never be resisted. It's God's word that the Holy Spirit uses to change us. It's his means to cleanse us from sin, "all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent." And James goes on to say in James 1:22, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." ***Real change*** will come only when we move from ***listening to acting*** upon God's word [Lk 11:28]!

So, if we are to grow in meekness, we must allow the Holy Spirit to use God's word to change us. That's why we must seek to personally read God's word daily and hear it soundly preached regularly as well. And every time we read or hear God's word, we must pursue the most critical step of obeying it. *That* is the evidence a person seeks to be controlled by the power of the Holy Spirit. In such a person's life, the Holy Spirit will produce the sweet characteristic of meekness or gentleness.

So, the first means the Holy Spirit uses to produce meekness in us is God's word.

The second means the Holy Spirit uses to produce meekness in us is Trials. Trials break us of our own will and drive us to submit to God's will. Trials push us to come more under God's control and let go of our own ways.

Interestingly, the Greek word that is translated as "meek" in Matthew 5:5 was used in Jesus's day to describe the taming of a wild and strong horse to come under the full control of its rider. Through the use of some pain, the wild horse would be tamed whereby later it could just be controlled by a small bit—that piece that would be kept between its teeth and with the use of a bridle [harness or leash]. This word was also used to break an ox so it could later be used for plowing.

The goal of the training was not to cripple the animal or to remove its strength. Instead, it was to bring its strength under the control of its master. An animal that successfully underwent that process of taming was described as having been "MEEKED."

A young soldier in the Peloponnesian Wars wrote to his fiancée about a gift he had for her. It was a white stallion. He described it as "the most magnificent animal I have ever seen. He responds obediently to the slightest command. He allows his master to direct him to his full potential."

And then he wrote, "He is a meek horse." The soldier wasn't saying that the horse was shy or even that he was like an old plow horse that allows people to beat him. He was an animal with great spirit, but that spirit was submissive to the rider.

Tied up in the word *meek* is the concept of power under control, the idea of being submissive to someone greater than ourselves." [Haddon Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living*, p. 51].

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The Holy Spirit does the same thing with us. He uses trials to break us of our will, and in that way, we are forced to depend on God. Typically, during trials, we are more willing to do what God tells us to do. We are more prone to yielding to him. We learn to surrender more to him and not take matters into our own hands. And through that process, the Holy Spirit starts producing more of this characteristic called meekness in us.

That's why we must not hate trials but see them as *opportunities* through which the Holy Spirit is building our character and producing more fruit in us. We will never be gentle and meek as long as we think the world revolves around us. That's why a good and a sovereign God designs trials to break us of such sinful thinking and help us see what is more important—which is for our spirit to come totally under his control.

And that kind of breaking through trials also helps us to be gentle in our dealings with others. People who have gone through trials are usually more patient toward others, more sensitive to the pains that others go through. Also, they are prone to actively seeking to do good to others. They don't pursue their own interests but are always trying to put the interests of others above their own [Phil 2:4]!

Meek people don't even care to defend themselves because they know they don't deserve anything. They don't get angry about what's done to them. Since they are already bowed low, they don't fear a fall! Their submissive spirits prevent them from seeking vengeance on others. Instead, they seek to be a blessing to others. And such a spirit is a result of being broken by trials. And it makes sense. Poverty of spirit [Matt 5:3] leads one to mourn for their spiritual condition [Matt 5:4] and, as a result, rely on God for everything [Matt 5:5]! And such people will understand they are unworthy and will treat others with kindness.

So, the Word of God and Trials—those are the 2 means the Holy Spirit uses to make us grow in meekness.

Encouragement to let go of a retaliatory spirit and pursue Meekness.

You see, retaliation never brings peace to our souls. **Hitting back to get our pound of flesh will never make us look like Christ.** So many homes, so many relationships broken because of a retaliatory spirit. *A retaliatory spirit causes nothing but significant damage to relationships in the home and outside. It brings grief to the Holy Spirit, and ultimately shame to the name of Christ.*

However, relying on God to bring justice in his time and, at the same time pursuing to do good to others (which is what meekness is all about), brings great glory to God and a blessing to us as well. To such people and such people only, Jesus promises, you will inherit the coming world.

Even in the present, meek people experience God's guidance. Psalm 25:9 says, "[He guides the humble \[meek\] in what is right and teaches them his way.](#)" You want to know God's will in your life? Be humble. Turn from your pride. Submit to God's ways. He will show you the right decisions to make!

The world needs to see more of a gentle and non-retaliatory spirit within us. And when they see that, they will see Jesus. He is the one the world really needs to see! We are simply his ambassadors called

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to represent him faithfully. We can never win someone to Christ by displaying an angry and hurtful spirit—be it in our homes or outside. But a gentle spirit has great power to move even hard hearts!

Even as a Christian, it's crucial that we continually repent of our arrogant attitudes and seek the help of the Holy Spirit to change us. We need to pray diligently, even fast, and cry out for deliverance. ***God will hear. God will respond. God will change us.***

Examine your life. Are you a meek person? How do you respond when someone insults you? Do you brood over it and plan on how to retaliate? What's your reaction when things don't go your way—even in the smallest of matters? Are you an angry person always wanting things your way? If that's your lifestyle, then you may need to see if you truly belong in God's kingdom—no matter what you profess with your mouth. Remember, the entire sermon on the mount is a mirror that Jesus holds up to help one examine if they are truly his followers. It's never too late to repent.

And if you've never submitted to God by embracing his Son Jesus, I pray you will do that today. Acknowledge your sins. Acknowledge your total inability to meet God's perfect standards. Cry over your sins and in faith, turn to Christ, who died for all the sins you have committed and will ever commit! Accept his offer of forgiveness and surrender your life to him. Then you will not only come into God's family but will also be able to pursue this attitude of meekness as empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Blessed indeed are the meek, for they and they alone will inherit the earth!